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### We Remember "UB 13" — Professor William R. Greiner

UB Law Forum

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*"Despite all his titles, accolades and accomplishments, he was always a teacher and educator. After his family, teaching is what he loved most."*

—Carol Greiner

# WE REMEMBER "UB 13" — PROFESSOR WILLIAM R. GREINER

**W**illiam R. Greiner, who served as UB's president for more than a decade, always preferred the title "Professor." That love of teaching was at the fore as the University community gathered Feb. 2 in the Center for the Arts to celebrate his life. In this special tribute, *UB Law Forum* gathers reflections from some of the many in the UB Law family for whom Bill Greiner holds a permanent place in their hearts.



## A best friend's tribute

THOMAS E. HEADRICK,  
SUNY DISTINGUISHED  
SERVICE PROFESSOR  
EMERITUS



Bill and I were close friends for over half a century. We were colleagues and partners at work and play for a third of a century. We met in 1958 at Yale Law School. It's hard to pin down what makes a friendship grow and endure—certainly shared interests, shared values and shared fascinations with life and our complex world, and also shared experiences and the sheer enjoyment of doing things together.

The Bill I knew at Yale was much the same as the Bill you all knew—serious about education, vastly knowledgeable, infinitely curious, incisively intelligent, open, serious and funny, forthright and empathetic, at ease with all whom he met and knew, and most of all blessed with prodigious energy and abundant common sense.

He grew up in Meriden, a small manufacturing city on the decline in central Connecticut. His father died when he was a youngster and his hard-working mother made certain he studied and



worked hard and acted responsibly and honestly in every way. He stayed near home for his education at Wesleyan and Yale. Moreover, in central Connecticut baseball fans have a choice—Yankees or Red Sox. Bill chose the Red Sox, signaling his support for underdogs and a willingness to soldier on in the face of disappointment.

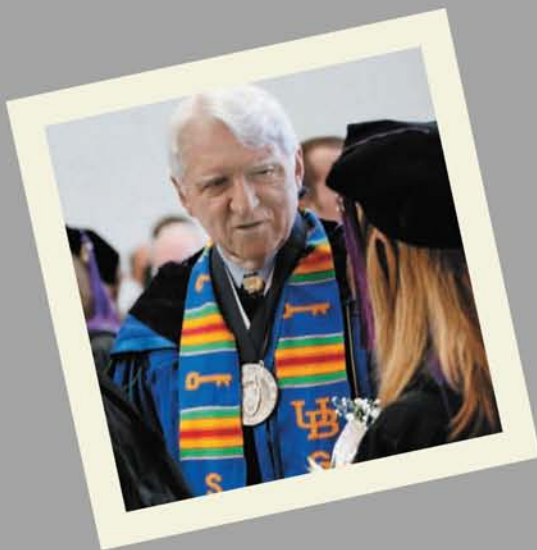
Sports were an important part of his life. At Yale we played basketball, squash and golf together. He was an exceptional golfer. He had a classic, long, flowing swing, naturally acquired, for he never had a lesson, and he regularly shot in the 70s. It was not surprising that Bill played a leading role in UB's move to Division I sports. But Bill's concerns were not so much over NCAA status. He was just the consummate fan. He loved watching games of all kinds, not as a quiet spectator, but as a connoisseur of talented and intelligent play and an often

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# WE REMEMBER

## REFLECTIONS FROM HEADRICK, JOYCE, BLACK, LETRO, CARREL AND NIESE



“I have had many personal encounters with law students... who went out of their way to remember and recount, gratefully and affectionately, not only Bill’s excellence in the classroom, but also his extra-classroom unselfish assistance and sincere interest in their progress and careers.”

— Professor Kenneth E. Joyce

KENNETH E. JOYCE, SUNY DISTINGUISHED  
TEACHING PROFESSOR EMERITUS

### “A true teacher of teachers”

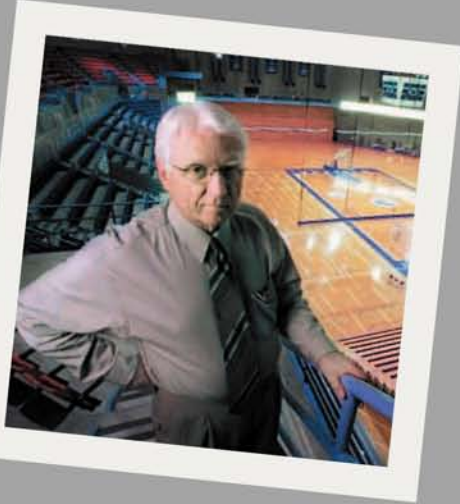
As an observer, close and distant, of Bill’s accomplishments over the years, I was struck by two consistent traits. First was Bill’s unhidden but genuine love for students (professional or non-professional, graduate or undergraduate) and his dedication to their interests. I have had many personal encounters with law students, some of them long out of law school, who went out of their way to remember and recount, gratefully and affectionately, not only Bill’s excellence in the classroom, but also his extra-classroom unselfish assistance and sincere interest in their progress and careers – all in all a truly impressive testament to Bill’s



humanity.

The second trait of Bill’s which made such an impression on me was his willingness, indeed eagerness, to engage, at the drop of a hat, in no-time-limit discussions on questions of law or policy with which one of his colleagues (often myself) was struggling. Bill and I both taught Tax and Property courses at the Law School, and the welcoming attitude he brought to engaging in what he liked to call “the life of the mind” made him a go-to guy on tough issues, much like our friend Lou Del Cotto (who had, and appreciated, similar experiences with Bill).

Both of these traits are those of a true teacher – indeed of a true teacher of teachers. It is no denigration of his other contributions to university life to say that that is how I will remember him.



THOMAS E. BLACK '79

## “Godspeed, Bill Greiner”

The Greiner memorial service held on Feb. 2 was a spectacular celebration of the life and legacy of Professor Greiner. The two hours of tributes to Bill Greiner – the president, the professor, the friend, the father, the husband – was, for me, summed up beautifully when Mary Kate O’Connell sang one of the professor’s favorite songs, *Be Kind*. For that, in short, is what Bill Greiner was – a kind man.



Professor Greiner, with his Phil Donohue style, taught tax law to a then second-year law student. Long after the definition of “income” had faded into the past, the examples of intellect without arrogance, and debate with civility, made a lasting impression on my career and on the careers of so many other students.

I ran into President Greiner at halftime at Super Bowl XXVII in Pasadena. He passed up the Michael Jackson performance to buy me a beer and catch up on my career. He had a genuine interest in his students and their lives and careers after law school.

In September 2008, Bill and Carol joined my wife, Bridget, and me for a Notre Dame football game. In the third quarter the stadium announcer blared out that the Bulls were leading Pittsburgh at the half. Bill beamed like the proud father he was.

Godspeed, Bill Greiner. Thank you for all the kindness that you have shown to me and to the legion of former students proud to have had the opportunity to call you Professor.

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vocal judge of officiating competence.

At Yale Law School, politics were an essential part of the milieu. Bill’s intelligence and talents marked him among his friends as a likely future Connecticut governor. Thus, many were surprised when he headed off to Seattle to teach after graduating. But his intellectual interests and his passion about education easily trumped any potential political aspirations.

His teaching and writing at UW reflected his intellectual core. Hired to teach a conventional business law course, he quickly transformed it into inquiry into the philosophical and social complexities of the functions of law in a society. His background in economics and law taught him that law was not an isolated discipline. Instead, law sat at an intersection of human aspirations and societal forces. It needed the perspectives that humanists and social scientists contribute to understanding those forces.

This outlook brought him to UB, where President Meyerson’s educational vision linked the arts and sciences with the professional disciplines, so that theoretical inquiry and social realities would inform each other. Bill was a major driver of the interdisciplinary reach that has marked UB Law School apart from almost all others and still does—a law school looking outward, a school without intellectual boundaries.

Many can recount his accomplishments and impact on UB. I will just mention two that illustrate his genius as an academic leader.

One was his successful campaign to allow UB to keep its tuition revenue. First, he grabbed the attention of the Pataki trustees with a series of papers detailing the inequity of SUNY budgets. Then he romanced them, using their ideology to show that leaving tuition revenue on the campuses created private-like incentives to attract students and improve programs. Once they bought in, he negotiated the details through the bureaucracy, and then built back UB’s enrollment, which he had purposely reduced, so that tuition revenue and UB’s budget could grow without exceeding the SUNY enrollment caps.

Another was his passion to turn the Amherst campus into a real university community, which was frustrated by a state construction system that could not build housing that students could afford. One day, reading through the New York Education Code (something lawyers do for entertainment), he found a curious provision allowing alumni associations to build student housing. With that legal lever, he quickly organized lawyers, bankers, architects, contractors and political friends and applied his persuasive skills and their expertise and influence to beat down the obstacles in Albany so that the campus became home to thousands more students.

Bill had a vision for UB. A single theme could not capture it. He wanted to advance all of UB’s complex and multiple missions, piece by piece, opportunity by opportunity. To accomplish this, he was a master at strategic thinking as well as tactical organization. That was his genius.

Buffalo and UB were part of his being. Buffalo was to him Meriden writ large – full of hard-working, able and good people capable of shaping a better future. UB was a fine university with large and realizable aspirations and importantly without pretensions.

Bill was without pretention, which is why many remember him so fondly as a president, a leader, a teacher, a colleague and a friend.

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## GREINER TRIBUTES

## WE REMEMBER / Continued from page 6



FRANCIS M. LETRO '79

*“Professor, tutor, advocate, authority figure, friend and life coach”*

I couldn't help but wonder what was there about this handsome, charming, athletic and brilliant kid from Connecticut – who graduated on scholarship from prestigious private schools like Wesleyan University and Yale Law School – that brought him to Buffalo on a career path in public education. He came to educate and mentor ordinary kids like me from families of little or no means, but long on hope and big dreams that one day, through hard work and somebody's help, one of their own could become a lawyer. Bill Greiner was that somebody.



He understood the value of public education to families like mine. He understood that law students like me from working-class families needed a professional role model, for which he served as such for countless students.

He was aware that very few of us, if any, had a lawyer or a judge in our families to emulate, let alone a lawyer or a judge living next door or in our neighborhood.

By default and design, he mentored countless public-education students who looked to him as professor, tutor, advocate, authority figure, friend and life coach. Some of us needed and received from him all of that and much more.

We can best honor him and his memory as former students and colleagues by bringing to the courtrooms, boardrooms and classrooms the humanity and civility that our beloved professor, colleague and mentor epitomized during his 40-some years of service to this great University.



ALAN S. CARREL '67

*“A mentor and advisor”*

It was Bill Greiner and Tom Headrick who persuaded me to leave the practice of law and come to UB. Once I arrived, Bill, the academic Associate Dean, became a mentor and adviser. There has never been a more approachable person! His patience, wisdom, kindness and values put him in a class by himself. He taught me that students come first, and that compassion, sincerity and persistence can move mountains.



I once wrote a harsh letter and asked Bill to review before I sent it out. Bill read it and did not change a thing. He simply told me that the letter was a good venting tool, but I should put it in a drawer for a few days and read it again before mailing it. When I reread the letter, I realized it should not be sent. That “drawer” tip is one I still practice.

I became even closer to Bill in 1996 when he was president of UB and asked me to temporarily be his deputy and help with transitions. I was in awe of his gift for tackling and resolving the most contentious and difficult problems with ease and grace. When I felt a union leader had berated him unfairly in the newspaper, Bill said I should view it from that person's perspective and should consider his responsibility to his constituency. Bill said you can't reach consensus until you understand everyone's point of view.

Bill was a visionary and an achiever who loved people and loved UB. He was charismatic and genuine, delegated extensively and never micromanaged. He never lost his temper and raised his voice only when cheering for the Bulls. Working with him every day, it was clear that his commitment to UB and his children was surpassed only by his commitment to his wife, Carol. Their marriage was literally a union and their lives a true partnership.

I learned much from Bill, and miss him greatly.





WILLIAM A. NIESE '61

## *"A true friend"*

Some 15 years ago while visiting the Law School for a meeting of the Dean's Advisory Council, I was introduced to President Bill Greiner for the first time. From that introduction began a remarkable experience. So what started with a simple handshake grew into a genuine and lasting friendship.



Bill had the great gift of being able to be a friend, not just an acquaintance whose name could be dropped in conversation, but a real friend.

It is not an overstatement to say that of all those who regularly associated with Bill, most, if not all, of them considered him to be a friend and in all probability, he indeed was. He had the seemingly unlimited capacity to touch the lives of others in a warm and personal way.

Time is the element that establishes and confirms a friendship; one person taking, and making, time to be with another. On those occasions when my wife and I would return to the University,

Bill, and usually Carol as well, would always have time to be with us, often for dinner or even a basketball game.

When Bill and Carol traveled to the west coast, they would make time to be with us for dinner, a round of golf, or both. When my mother died, Bill and Carol made time to attend her funeral. In all of these ways, and many others, the Greiners, both Bill and Carol, were an uplifting force in our lives. Of all the gifts they gave us, none was greater than the gift of being a true friend.



UB PRESIDENT JOHN B. SIMPSON

## *"A gifted leader"*

Bill Greiner had a profound effect on every aspect of this institution, from academics and research, to student life and our engagement with our alumni and the community. His vision and leadership made UB the outstanding institution it is today.

He was a gifted leader with an abiding belief in the university. His devotion made others want to dedicate themselves to making UB the best it could become. We will miss him greatly.



UB PROVOST SATISH K. TRIPATHI

## *"His legacy will endure"*

Looking across the University at Buffalo's academic and physical landscapes, one can truly appreciate the indelible mark that President Emeritus Greiner had on our university. During his 42-year tenure at UB, he transformed our university in so

many lasting and meaningful ways. His body of work has enabled us, as a university community, to be among the finest public research universities in the nation. We owe so much of our success and future successes to UB's 13th president. He will be greatly missed, but, quite rightly, his legacy will endure.



UB LAW SCHOOL DEAN MAKAU W. MUTUA

## *"He loved the law"*

The Law School has lost an invaluable ally and advisor. Bill Greiner's ability and willingness to mentor countless law students was typical of his loyalty and selfless service to the Law School and UB. He loved the law. His name is fondly remembered by UB Law alumni throughout the country. The Law School, university and community are all better

because of Professor Greiner.

## *William R. Greiner Scholarship Fund*

For those who wish to make a contribution in memory of Professor Greiner, the family has identified three campus programs that held special importance to him: the Center for the Arts, UB athletics and the William R. Greiner Scholarship Fund. The fund, established in his honor in 2004, supports an endowment for a full-tuition scholarship to the UB Law School for a meritorious student who exemplifies leadership ability, dedication to public service and commitment to the Western New York community as a whole.

Checks should be made out to the William R. Greiner Scholarship Fund and mailed to:

Alan S. Carrel, Vice Dean  
University at Buffalo Law School  
John Lord O'Brian Hall, Room 311  
Buffalo, NY 14260  
(716) 645-6222, carrel@buffalo.edu